INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF APPLIED TECHNOLOGIES IN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Strategic Roles for Library and Information Centres in Nigeria: Before, During and Aftermath of Disaster

Bello Tukur
University Library,
Federal University, Gusau
bellotukur25@gmail.com

Abstract
Disaster whether natural or manmade in Libraries and Information Centers has three chronological phases: before, during and after phases. Today, it has been observed that, beside measures and facilities for Disaster prevention (before phase), there are no essentials facilities and measures for Disaster response (during phase) and recovery (after phase) available in most of libraries and information centers in Nigeria. The paper, therefore seeks to examine roles and measures librarians could perform or provide for effective Disaster prevention, response and recovery practices in libraries and information centers in Nigeria. Relevant literatures on Disaster were reviewed. Findings from the study revealed that, for libraries and information centers in Nigeria to effectively prevent or mitigate the effect the disaster could have on library collections, librarians as members of library disaster control team must be tasked with responsibility of performing certain roles to mitigate each phase. This include taking preventive measures (before phase) such as inspection of the building on daily basis, provision of adequate security, provision of adequate training and modern equipments); Responsive measure, (during phase) that involves evacuation of library resources and disaster mitigation is highly effective while segregation and drying of library resources are recommend after the phase. Base on these findings, it was recommended that librarians should be more exposed in understanding each phase; its cause and remedies for better disaster management in libraries. And there should be clear separation of responsibly among members or staff responsible for implementing disaster plan in the libraries.

Keywords: *Disaster, Libraries Disaster, Disaster Phases*

1.1 Introduction

Protection of library and information materials against any forms of threat should forms part of core plan of any serious library and information center. Library and library materials are not immune to catastrophic effect of either natural or manmade disaster that can struck the library and its holding without prior notice. Hence, in addition to the roles played by librarians as educators,

researchers, psychologists, information scientists, coordinator, public relation officers, librarians also played the role of protector, safeguarding the vast information resources in their libraries. According to Kolawole et al (2015) libraries have been affected a lot from disaster such as flood, fire, leaking roof, mutilation, insect, fungi and theft. These actions or threats to library and its holdings are viewed as disaster.

Baag (cited by Sulaiman, 2019) described disaster as an "occurrence that causes death or destruction" it's an unexpected event that may trigger the loose of lives or properties. Eden & Mathew (1996) vividly described library disaster as "any threat which threatens human's safety and damage library building, collections equipment and system. Recent disaster happening in Nigeria such as fire outbreak in president Kennedy library of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria in 2008; flood in Ibadan in 2011 and fire outbreak in Alaafin of Oyo in 2013; fire incident at Bauchi road campus of University of Jos library in 2013 and the unfortunate occurrence of the fire incident at the Naragutta campus library of the University in 2016 and numbers of reported and unreported disaster attacks in forms of leaking roof, insect attacks theft and mutilation and many others disaster happening in the country have left libraries with no option than to review and formulate a comprehensive disaster plan that effectively covers disaster phases: before, during and after (Kolawole et al 2015, Ilo et al 2018).

Disaster of whatever nature goes through a cycle otherwise known as disaster phases. Understanding each phase; its need, strategies, resources and tool is tantamount to effective disaster management. Moreover, understanding the phases will help libraries to prepare and acquire necessary skills and equipment to approach each phase decisively, respond to the disaster in a smarter, more informed way.

Disaster control plan or disaster plan is a comprehensive and detailed document highlighting the procedures of preventing, preparing, and responding to disaster. According to Lyall (1993) disaster plan "is a document which describes the procedures devised to prevent and prepare for disasters, and those propose to respond to and recover from disasters when they occur." With a disaster plan, libraries, archives, museum, historical societies and other collection-holding institutions can reduce the risk of disasters and minimize loses. The document if well prepared can aids libraries to mitigate the effect disaster may post.

2.1 Literature Review

Disaster in any form could spell a doom to library and information center and their programme or services. According to Morgan & Smith (1997), "disaster in library context could be natural or manmade; natural disasters are generally induced by such event as flood, fires, earthquake, storm (a combination of rain and wind), cyclones, and hurricane. Manmade disaster includes destruction during a war, threat emanating from social or political unrest such as bombing or rioting, malicious vandalism or arson, Power failure and power surge". Any destruction in libraries either resulted from natural or human error could amount to significant damages to the library's collection. Ilo, et al (2018) further identified both natural and manmade disasters as the major threat to library's collection in Nigeria.

They identified leaking roof and pipe, severe weather condition, biological agents, flood, fire, insect and rodents attacks as the major disasters prevalent in south west Nigerian universities library. Corroborating on the issue, Eden and Matthews, (1997), Cited by Marfo & Borteye, (2010) further added that "Disasters can be commonly caused by fires started by arson or an electrical fault, water from burst pipes or flooding as a

result rain, poor storage and environmental conditions, inadequate security leading to breaking and theft, and poorly maintained buildings". They further added that, Poor electrical installation and inadequate inspection of the building or library could be major reason for fire outbreak and often the consequence is destruction of library's collection. Water either from roof leakages or burst pipes or even flood or heavy rain can wet library's collection and speed up the decay of the materials. Poor or inadequate security in the libraries often accounts for the theft and mutilation libraries are facing. Abareh (2014) shifts the blame on poor staff sensitization on the part of the libraries on disaster preparedness. Staff in the libraries are either partially sensitized or no sensitized at all on measures or technique of disaster prevention, response and recovery. Consequently, disasters such as roof leakages, insect and termites attacks are prevalent in libraries in Nigeria. In the same vein, Uwake (2019) further added poor disaster plan implementation and monitoring, lack of staff sensitization on staff disaster preparedness as factor complicating disaster preparedness in libraries. Staff are not generally trained on method and techniques of handling modern disaster suppressing equipments as well as general sensitization on how to prepare for a disaster.

Libraries worldwide face increasing frequency of varieties of disaster; hence the need to reduce the risk disaster may post on library and its collection through thorough and careful management of the situation. Disaster management is significant as it can mitigate the effect; assure prompt and appropriate assistant to the victim of disaster, achieve rapid and effective recovery. (Sayed & Kulatunga, 2017). According to Nikhbashi & Farahami (2011), Disaster management can be defined as "set of process or processes designed to be implemented before, during and after disaster to prevent and mitigate their effects" the process or processes involves adequately planning for the disaster before the disaster occurrence as well as responding to the disaster during its occurrence and recovery from the catastrophe. Planning for disaster encompasses provision of comprehensive disaster plan that not only highlights the roles the staff or librarians to play for the prevention of disaster but also guidelines and procedure to follow for successful mitigation of prevention of the disaster. Responding to the disaster equally involves planning ahead for the physical confrontation of the disaster. Bansal, (2015) argued that some forms of disaster in libraries cannot be anticipated rather the disaster plan or disaster management team in libraries should have a contingency plan that would deal with such situation.

But Morgan and Smith (1997), in their wisdom focused solely on prevention and recovery aspect of disaster management in their definition of disaster management. They see disaster management as a "development of plan that will reduce the likelihood of disaster occurring and further also reduce the extent of the damage and development of recovery procedures that outline steps to follow to restore damage items". Disaster management is far much more than planning for prevention and recovery of items after the disaster but also responding the disaster during its occurrence. In fact, responding to a disaster during its occurrence, if well planned and executed, will eventually makes the work of recovery a lot easier. This was later supported by Ifejah et al (2019) where they stressed that "disaster management in libraries goes beyond planning for prevention, responding or recovery of library materials but also encompassed planning for the protection of electronic holdings of the library and its staff" information and data of users must also be protected against unauthorized access. Computer and other devices must be

protected from virus and hackers.

2.2 DISASTER PHASES AND STRATEGIC ROLES OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION CENTRES IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Although, some scholars and disaster management organizations such as Disaster Medicine, Geography Note, Restore etc categorized disaster phases into four stages: prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. Others went on to separate prevention with mitigation thereby making them five. However, in the light with the roles to be played by librarians in disaster control, each of the above phases can falls within the following three broad phases.

1.   PHASE ONE (Before the Disaster)

This is the first phase of disaster of whatever nature. The phase involves a numbers of measures or actions to be taken by the library or information holding institution to completely prevent the unfortunate occurrence of disaster taking into cognizance that most libraries disasters are manmade disasters. These actions include:

i.   Inspection of the Building
This is the first action under phase one. A library or information holding institution should try to prevent disaster in their institution through regular inspection of the building with the aim of identifying deficiencies or problem that may pose some threat or danger to the library collection. In an ideal situation, a member of the in house disaster committee is usually assigned the responsibility of inspecting the library building on daily basis to identify problem areas find a way or means of fixing the problem. He is to also ensure safer and continuous access to all sections or parts of the library. Most importantly, the committee should ensure the safety of the building during renovation of the library or its part. The committee should also ensure that all equipments and facilities meant for disaster control are not only functioning but are also in perfect condition for use at any given time.

ii.   Provision of Adequate Security
Security in the library involves the provision of appropriate measures to safeguard and ensure the safety of library collection. Akpor (2013) described library security as "any device designed to guard materials against crime, disaster, fire and attack." Library disaster committee should ensure that security measures are extended beyond the traditional provision of security personnel at the entrance/exit of the library to the modern approach of enhancing security level through the use of information and communication technology gadgets. MCcumb, (2004) (cited by Tennat, 2001) affirmed that " Video surveillance and Close- Circuit Television (CCTV) system serve as way to monitor and record security, deter crime and ensure safety". The disaster management committee can make use of this technology to monitor inflow and outflow of people visiting the library as well as observe staff at work in various section of the library. This technology can greatly assist to deter theft and ensure the security of library premises and other facilities.

iii.   Provision of Adequate Training
A focal point of disaster preparedness is to ensuring adequate and elaborate training are being given to staff within the library especially the disaster management committee. The essence of the training is to provide members with necessary knowledge and techniques that would

enable them to cope with any challenge posed by the Modern facilities. This will also help them to carry out effective disaster prevention in the library. Furthermore, training of such nature should be simplified and be given periodically by professionals in the area of disaster management. Component of the training should involve Disaster Training preparedness; Disaster Fire suppression; Basic Disaster Operation and Light Search and Rescue Operations.

iv. Provision of Adequate Equipment
Disaster is an unavoidable phenomenon, and in most cases, the ones frequently associated with the library and information centers include Fire or Water disaster. Hence, it will not be out of place to provide modern technological facilities that can be used for disaster prevention and preparedness. Devices such as Automatic Fire detection device; Water sensing alarm; Extinguishing System and other relevant facilities should be adequately provided at all times and in good conditions for eventualities.

2. PHASE TWO (During the Disaster)
This phase is the most dreadful and dangerous phase. The phase centered on responding to disaster at the time of the occurrence. It involves requires physical, pragmatic and responsive approaches. The sole aim in this phase is to mitigate or minimize the threat of a disaster thereby preventing its escalation. The phase has the following elements:

i. Evacuation of Library Resources
Evacuation of library resources involves removing or taking away all library resources (print and non print materials) and staff from danger areas to safety ground in the event of disaster. When disaster struck, whether natural or manmade, library resources need to be evacuated instantly. This implies that whether the situation is storm, flood, riot, explosion, fire, radiological and biological accidents, civil unrest and violence, efforts must be made by the library authorities to ensure that materials are evacuated immediately. Consequently the libraries evacuation plan must be in accordance with the world's emergency evacuation standard; Priorities should be given to certain information resources; that is what types of information resources need to be evacuated first; consideration should also be given to the Vulnerable users, the aged, the physically challenged users and a clear chain of command and designation of authority must also be established and followed religiously.

During planning for evacuation, it is possible to think of all other scenarios for example clarity on all exists/entry points, information resources on high/ floor etc.

ii. Disaster Fighting
As noted earlier, the most common disaster frequently associated with the library and information centers are fire and flood. It's therefore necessary as a measure of preventing the escalation of the situation to fight the disaster back. This can be achieved through:

a. Switching off or cutting all electrical appliance or cutting down the power supply in the building;

b. Cutting down sources of water supplies in the affected areas in the event of water disaster; and

c. Raising alarm for possible assistance elsewhere

3. PHASE THREE (After the Disaster)

After disaster strikes, series of actions and measures are employed to restore, recover and minimize the effect the disaster may have on library materials. These may include:

i. Segregation

Segregation is the careful separation of library information resources from those seriously damaged to those partially affected during disaster. This measure becomes relevant especially in Water Disaster to prevent wet material from deteriorating other materials. In general, different papers tend to absorb water at different rates depending on the age, condition and composition of the materials. Hence, separating affected papers became paramount.

ii. Drying

The fact that no library resources are dispensable and replacing information resources is more difficult and tedious than acquiring it, it becomes necessary to consider drying affected materials rather than considering the costly approach of discarding them. Modern drying facilities such as Freezer chamber, Vacuum Chamber could be used for effective dying of wet information resources to prevent the growth of mould.

Other measures that could be considered include: Discarding resources that are no longer useful; Arranging for insurance claim where applicable; restoration of disaster site and analyzing the existing disaster plans with a view to improve it.

Conclusion

The paper has been able to discuss and explained the various phases of disaster in libraries and information centers. The phases were identified as those before the disaster; those during the disaster and those after the disaster. Protecting library resources against any threat therefore is heavily on the shoulder of librarians or libraries and information centers. The more librarians are exposed to the various phases of disaster discussed in the paper, the easier it would be for them to fight disaster in their respective libraries. Understanding each phase; its causes and remedies would greatly assist librarians in formulating future plan for library disaster policies.

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